

Message Text

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EXDIS

CAT DELEGATION FOR MARTIN CHESHES

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TAGS: PCAT, PARM, US, XA, UR, KE
SUBJECT: US-SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ARMS TALKS: AFRICA

REF: STATE 178349

1. DCM TODAY MET WITH STEVEN MAITHA, FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDER SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF AMERICAN AND UN AFFAIRS, TO DISCUSS IMPENDING HELSINKI TALKS AND SOLICIT KENYAN VIEWS ON CONCEPT OF REGIONAL RESTRAINT IN ARMS TRANSFERS. (BOTH FOREIGN MINISTER AND PERMANENT SECRETARY ARE IN KHARTOUM FOR OAU MEETING). IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFERENCE INSTRUCTIONS, DCM REASSURED MAITHA THAT US REMAINED VERY MUCH AWARE OF KENYA'S NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS AND INTENDED TO CONTINUE OUR COOPERATION IN HELPING KENYA MEET ITS DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS.

2. MAITHA THANKED DCM FOR INFORMATION, WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD PASS ON TO GOK UPPER ESCHELONS. MAITHA POINTED OUT THAT DURING FIRST 14 YEARS OF ITS INDEPENDENCE, KENYA WAS VERY MODEL OF RESTRAINT IN ARMS PROCUREMENT. AS GOK INTERLOCUTORS HAVE SO OFTEN STRESSED BEFORE, MAITHA UNDERLINED THAT KENYA HAD PREFERRED TO DEVOTE ITS AVAILABLE
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RESOURCES TO DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN BUILDING UP LARGER ARMED FORCES. KENYA STILL FULLY ENDORSED PRINCIPLE OF ARMS RESTRAINT, BUT PUTTING PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE WAS ONLY POSSIBLE IN ABSENCE OF THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY.

3. TREMENDOUS SOMALI ARMS BUILD-UP, TOGETHER WITH SOMALI REFUSAL TO ABJURE CLAIMS TO ITS NEIGHBORS' TERRITORIES, INCLUD-

ING KENYA'S NORTH EASTERN PROVINCE, HAD CAUSED GREAT CONCERN IN KENYA. SOMALI INVASION OF OGADEN HAD CONVINCED GOK THAT IT HAD NO OPTION BUT TO MODERNIZE AND EXPAND ITS OWN ARMED FORCES IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME TO MEET SOMALI THREAT.

4. MAITHA SAID HE WAS AWARE OF NO AFRICAN CONSIDERATION OF UNDERTAKING A REGIONAL AGREEMENT ON ARMS LIMITATION SIMILAR TO THAT IN LATIN AMERICA. MAITHA SEEMED DUBIOUS THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE EFFECTIVE IN THE NEAR FUTURE BECAUSE OF THE MANY SUB-REGIONAL IMBALANCES IN MILITARY STRENGTH.

5. COMMENTING ON THE HELSINKI TALKS, MAITHA SAID IT SEEMED TO HIM UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIET UNION, A DECLARED PROPONENT OF WORLD REVOLUTION, WOULD OR COULD EVER FORSWEAR PROVIDING ARMS IN SUPPORT OF "REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLES" WHEREVER THEY MAY OCCUR.

6. REITERATING AN EVER RECURRING KENYAN THEME, MAITHA EXPRESSED SOME UNEASINESS THAT, ONCE AGAIN, NON-AFRICAN POWERS WERE MEETING TO DISCUSS WHAT WAS GOOD IN AFRICA WITHOUT INVOLVING THE AFRICANS THEMSELVES IN THE TALKS. DCM ASSURED UNDER SECRETARY THAT SUCH WAS NOT US INTENT, BUT WE FELT WE SHOULD EXPLORE EVERY AVENUE THAT MIGHT LEAD TO A GLOBAL REDUCTION IN ARMS BUILD-UPS, REDUCING THEREBY
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DANGERS TO REGIONAL AND WORLD PEACE.

7. COMMENT: THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO SHOW MUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR INITIATIVES, REGIONAL OR OTHERWISE, AIMED AT PROMOTING RESTRAINT IN ARMS TRANSFERS UNTIL KENYA ITSELF HAS DEVELOPED A MORE CREDIBLE DETERRENT FORCE WITH WHICH TO FACE THE GREATLY SUPERIOR FORCES OF NEIGHBORING SOMALIA.

8. BY COINCIDENCE, DISCUSSION ON THIS TOPIC FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY ON HEELS OF PRESENTATION TO KENYAN DEFENSE OFFICIALS BY MAJOR GENERAL JOHN HILL OF RESULTS OF US SURVEY OF KENYAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND US OFFER OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE IN KENYA'S SECURITY PROGRAM. WE HAVE THUS OFFERED CONCRETE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT OUR ASSURANCES IN REGARD TO KENYA'S OWN DEFENSE NEEDS.
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